

CEDARS OF LEBANON

LOUIS MARSHALL of the AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

A Report to President Wilson

THIS month, in its Fiftieth Anniversary Year, the American Jewish Committee holds a Half-Century Observance Conference at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York (April 10-14), dedicated to the theme "The Pursuit of Liberty at Home and Abroad." It was this same pursuit that inspired the devoted service of Louis Marshall (1856-1929), one of the Committee's distinguished founders, to his fellow Jews. A leading member of the New York bar for forty years, Marshall's solicitude for the rights of all minorities was unflagging; he argued before the highest court of the land, for example, the right of Negroes to vote in Democratic primaries in Texas, and the ownership of land by Japanese in California.

Through his connection with the American Jewish Committee (whose president he was from 1912 until his death) he fought to obtain civil rights for the Jews of Eastern Europe, and at the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919 he led a successful struggle to have written into the peace treaties guarantees of such rights.

THE following selection is taken from *Louis Marshall: Champion of Liberty*, two volumes of

PURSUANT to previous arrangement I called on Mr. Dmowski at his apartments at Plaza Hotel at three o'clock this afternoon. While all the incidents are fresh in my mind I have reduced the narrative to writing.

Mr. Dmowski greeted me quite cordially and informed me that he had seen my letter to Mr. Paderewski, of which I append a copy together with the latter's communication to me. He proceeded to say that he regarded it important for the Jews to cooperate with the Poles in their aspirations for a restoration of their national existence, and in substance spoke as follows:

his papers and addresses edited by Charles Reznikoff, with an introduction by Oscar Handlin (who contributed "The American Jewish Committee: a Half-Century View," to our January issue). Sponsored by the American Jewish Committee, the book will appear in May under the imprint of the Jewish Publication Society of America. The selection we present was sent to President Wilson as a report by Marshall of his conversation in New York on October 6, 1918, with Roman Dmowski, the leader (along with the pianist Ignace Paderewski) of the National Polish party. This party aimed at securing the establishment of a free Poland as part of the peace treaty to be drawn up after the end of the war. Although Marshall's immediate object in calling on Dmowski was to stop the economic boycott of the Jews that had been in force in Poland since 1912, his ultimate purpose was to secure equal civil rights for the more than three million Jews of the projected New Poland. The conference succeeded only in demonstrating the incorrigible hostility to the Jews of such Polish leaders as Dmowski, but foreshadowed the elaborate negotiations Marshall later undertook at Versailles.—Ed.

"I wish to be entirely frank and to explain my attitude and that of the Poles towards the Jews of Poland. My father conducted fisheries and had close business relations with the Jews of our country. At his funeral there were probably more Jews present than non-Jews, and I looked upon them as friends. I am a biologist by profession and never expected to be engaged in politics. For centuries there was no anti-Jewish prejudice in Poland and there probably never would have been any had it not been for Russia."

I interrupted him to say that the Polish nobility had evinced continued hostility and brutality toward the Jews of Poland, that

the Church had from time to time evinced enmity, and I gave him to understand that I was familiar with Jewish history in Poland. He replied that it was true that the nobility was brutal, but the brutality toward the Jews was of the same type as that which it practiced upon the Polish peasants and the proletariat generally. He continued: "There never was a pogrom in Poland."

I AGAIN interrupted him by saying that there had been Polish pogroms since 1914, and that Georg Brandes had charged him, Dmowski, as the leader of the National Democratic Party, with having advocated pogroms in the newspaper called *Dwa Groszi*. He remarked that Mr. Brandes was in error, had been misinformed, and had subsequently retracted that statement, which could be proven by Mr. Luzzatti. I replied that this was new to me, but that I was fully acquainted with the economic boycott that had been in progress for six years and which was worse than a pogrom. He then said: "I must confess that personally I have been hostile to the Jews and have as a leader of a political party deliberately engaged in a struggle against them, and am responsible for the economic boycott to which they have been subjected. I know your feelings on the subject, but I will give you the reasons which prompted my action. About 1908 a large number of Lithuanian Jews, who could no longer endure the treatment accorded to them by Russia, came to Poland. Strangely enough they persisted, after they came to Poland, in speaking the Russian language obtrusively. They also began a movement whereby the Jews were induced to employ Jewish doctors and Jewish lawyers instead of Polish physicians and lawyers as theretofore. Consequently they began what I call a boycott. Although the Jews of Warsaw represented only thirty-eight per cent of the population, they took upon themselves to advocate the election of a Jew to the Duma instead of a Pole, there being but one representative in the Duma from Warsaw. This culminated at the elections for the Fourth Duma, in 1912, in a serious conflict. On account of the peculiarity of the election laws and the attitude of the Polish electorate, many of whom intentionally abstained from registering, it was found that the Jews who availed themselves of the right of registra-

tion represented 24,000 voters and the Poles only 22,000, and as a result of this situation the candidate of our party was defeated. The Jews brought about the election of the Socialist candidate. This led to great bitterness, and from that time on we conducted the boycott of which you are complaining.

"There were other reasons which led to a clash between the Poles and the Jews. Poland is a poor country. Until recently the Poles were engaged in agriculture and as laborers exclusively. The Jews devoted themselves to commerce and industry. It became apparent to the Poles that it was desirable that they should also engage in commerce to enable them to gain a livelihood. That resulted in competition with the Jews, who resented the intrusion of the Poles into their economic field. Unfortunately it was a struggle for existence between two portions of the population, both of which were exceedingly poor. There were not crumbs enough to go around. It was therefore a question as to who should have the crumbs. Although the Poles are poor, the Jews are even more wretched. They have been exploited, their workshops are of necessity in their homes, are most unsanitary, and even with the assistance of their children they have found it difficult to earn enough to keep them from starvation. On the other hand, the Russians who exploited them were growing rich on the proceeds of the labor of these wretched people. Another reason for the growing hostility of the Poles against the Jews lay in the fact that the Jews persisted in speaking Yiddish, and even their men of education, who had in and before 1862 been patriotic Poles, began to take the attitude that the Polish cause was a lost cause, that Poland was finished, and they therefore directed their activities into other channels. In Posen the Jews rapidly absorbed the German language and abandoned even Yiddish, and in towns in which they were in the majority they changed Polish names which had previously been used, into German names. All these things together contributed to the creation of a feeling of animosity, and it was for that reason that I and my party encouraged the boycott, which has been a very severe one and terrible in its operation, and I am frank to say that it continues to this moment and has been growing worse instead of better."

BEFORE he could resume his statement, I took up the thread of the conversation and said, in substance:

"Since it seems to be in order, I shall make an *apologia pro mea vita* of a different character from that which you have made. I was born in this State. My parents both came from Germany, my father in 1849, my mother in 1853. They came here practically as refugees. They could not endure the manifestations of hatred, bigotry and intolerance which prevailed in their native land. They prospered, thanks to the freedom and opportunities which our country accorded them, and they inspired in their children a feeling of love and devotion for the land which gave them equality of right and opportunity, and instilled in them the thought that the duties of citizenship were the correlative of the rights thus bestowed. From my earliest days I associated with Jews who had come to this country from Poland. They were men and women of sterling worth. I can point to many men of my acquaintance who were of Polish Jewish ancestry who attained a high rank in the professions and in business and have long been honored and respected by their fellow-citizens. One of my earliest enthusiasms, as well as one of my earliest sorrows, was Poland. As an American I felt a debt of gratitude to Kosciuszko, who came to this country during our Revolutionary War to assist in the attainment of our liberty, and I grieved at the injustice which led to the division of Poland between Russia, Austria and Prussia. I also had the honor to become acquainted with Dr. Marcus Jastrow, of Philadelphia, one of the leading Rabbis of this country as well as one of its finest citizens, who fought in the Polish Revolution of 1862 and was imprisoned because of his participation in it, and who with other Rabbis of Warsaw, by way of protest against the tyranny of Russia, closed his synagogue. His sons are today professors in American universities. I know, therefore, from direct contact with Polish Jews what their feelings toward Poland were. Although they had suffered and had come to this country to better their condition, they still felt a deep attachment for Poland. It came to me, therefore, as a shock when I first learned of the details of the boycott and of the explanation of its origin, which

were communicated to me by no less a person than Mr. Sokolov, and if you will permit me, Mr. Dmowski, to use the expression, I regard the action of your party and of yourself as simply monstrous."

Here he interrupted me to say: "I think that your characterization is not out of place. In fact, I like the word monstrous." I continued.

"I have followed your explanation with close attention. It is practically the same that was made to me and some of my friends some time ago, at a conference at which Mr. Rosenwald presided, by Mr. Paderewski. It is, however, neither an explanation nor a justification of what has taken place. To begin with, I cannot see the consistency of your arguments with regard to the effect of the presence of Jewish refugees from Russia as producing a pro-Russian propaganda. You concede that these people came to Poland because conditions in Russia were intolerable. You have conceded in the course of your statement (which he had) that these men hated Russia, and yet you argue that they nevertheless were seeking to Russianize Poland. In the next place, you regard as a boycott on the part of the Jews the fact that Jews consulted lawyers and physicians of their faith. That comes far from establishing the claim of the creation of a boycott. The choice of a medical or legal adviser depends on many reasons other than the far-fetched theory of a boycott. The language question could certainly not have justified a boycott. You know how tenacious people are of their mother-tongue, and it is only a chauvinist who seeks to prevent people from speaking in the language familiar to them from childhood. I remember the indignation felt by the Poles, as well as by all reasonable and fair-minded men, when Germany sought by legislation to forbid the Poles who lived in Germany to speak, read or write Polish. I have recently had a very interesting correspondence with the Governor of Iowa, who was of the opinion that nobody in this country should be permitted to use any language other than English. What would become of the Poles in the United States if such a course were adopted? Is it not a fact that they have clung to their language here in America, that they have their own schools in which they are taught in Polish, and their own churches

and their own newspapers which are conducted in their native tongue? I may say that, in 1909, when I served as Chairman of the Immigration Commission of New York, this proposition, as applicable to the Poles of Buffalo, was brought to my attention. No objection whatever was made to the teaching of the Polish language or to its use in the Polish schools, the only qualification which we thought proper being that the language of the country should of necessity be taught in these schools as well as Polish."

HE THEN said: "You are entirely right, but our opposition to Yiddish lies in the fact that its basis is German and that the natural tendency of continuing its use would be to make the Jews German instead of Polish in their sympathies in the event that differences should ever arise between the Poles and the Germans."

I pointed out to him that this was entirely erroneous, that loyalty did not depend upon language, that that was demonstrated by the armies which we are now sending abroad, where there are tens of thousands of men who are of German birth or descent and who speak German and who nevertheless are loyal to America, as is shown by the casualty lists published daily in the newspapers. I then said that it was very clear to me, even from his statement, that the real basis of the boycott was political, and that it had apparently been decided in cold blood to destroy the Jews because of the exercise by them of their political rights and for voting contrary to the wishes of Mr. Dmowski and his party; that I understood that the Jewish opposition to his candidacy was due to his pronounced anti-Semitism and that he was unwilling to retire for a candidate who did not share his hostility to the Jews.

Thereupon he naively asked: "But why should they not have voted for a Pole? Poland had only eleven seats in the Duma." I replied that it was just as much for the interest of the Jews who had a limited number of seats in the Duma, to be represented by one who understood their problems and difficulties and could advocate their rights, as it was for the Poles to be represented by one of their number. If the right of franchise meant anything and if the professed

platform of Mr. Dmowski was to be of any value, then every citizen of Poland should have the right to vote in accordance with his own belief as to what was desirable and according to his own conscience; that if a voter was to be punished because he did not vote as those of another party wished him to vote, then it was apparent that there could be no liberty, and that even the grant of political rights would prove a source of danger. Referring to the Warsaw election, I said: "The conditions which prevailed were in large measure due to the peculiar attitude taken by the Poles. If the Jews represented only thirty-eight per cent of the electorate, then the Poles, who represented the remaining sixty-two per cent, could have easily outvoted them, unless they were divided among themselves, and if they were divided among themselves, it was because they had the right to be. The fact, therefore, that the Jews were persecuted for the exercise of their political rights demonstrated the iniquity of the policy of the so-called Polish National Committee, initiated, as you, Mr. Dmowski, have conceded, by you. You have protested against the suggestion that I made, on the authority of Mr. Brandes, that the Poles had conducted pogroms against the Jews. Let me say that, in my judgment, a pogrom is a thousand times less objectionable than the boycott which you have invented. A pogrom is an act of brutality, it is sporadic, it is an outburst of passion, which dies down almost as rapidly as it comes into being; there is bloodshed and loss of property. But such a boycott as you have created and which has now continued for six years, is a manifestation of hatred which grows by what it feeds upon. You have introduced poison into the system of the Polish people, who, you say, had previously been free from prejudice against the Jews. This poison works day and night. It becomes more virulent as the years go on. It is subtle and insidious in its operation. It passes beyond the control of him who first administered it, and in the end is destructive not only of the immediate victim, but of those in whom the venom has been engendered. If the Poles were free from religious or racial prejudice against the Jews before you carried your policy into operation, it is you who have lowered the moral fibre of the Polish people, and it is you alone who can

and should persuade them of the error of their ways and induce them to terminate this horrible boycott and to fraternize with the Jews of Poland. The Pope, a few years ago, recognized the injustice of this boycott and, as I understand it, through the leading clergymen of Poland, sought to put it down, but they did not succeed because of the opposition of your party."

HE WALKED up and down his room while I was making these remarks, and then said: "Yes, I know what the Pope did, but you are perhaps unaware of the fact that I am not persona grata at the Vatican. While I fully appreciate all that you say, if I were now suddenly to change front and to deal with the boycott as you suggest, my party would immediately say that I was bought."

I replied that I could not see how that would be possible if his party had confidence in him and if he was its leader as he conceded that he was. They knew as well as he the motive which led them to unleash the bloodthirsty tiger and that it was in their power not only to make amends but to help the cause of Poland by destroying that tiger with their own hands. Moreover, the moral soundness of a policy which united the Polish people and which did away with the wickedness of the boycott could be made clear by the Polish press, on the forum and in the churches, and the same agencies that had created it could be directed toward its elimination.

He retorted that after all the real cause of the boycott rested in the poverty of the country and in the fact that there were not enough crumbs to go around, and that, therefore, the Poles were obliged to save themselves from starvation by engaging in competition, however destructive, against the Jews who were engaged in commerce and industry. "But," he said, "I am sure that if the New Poland is created, with all of the resources that it would have, we should occupy almost the same position as does the United States, because we could then take care of all of our people and there would be no such conflict of interest as that which now exists." He then displayed to me a map of the New Poland, which covered not only Russian Poland as it has heretofore existed, but also Galicia, the Province of Posen, including Danzig, but excluding the

region of Koenigsberg, which he said was German, and a part of Silesia. That would give Poland tremendous coal fields containing sixty-four billion tons of coal, exceeding by more than twenty billions the tonnage of the Westphalian coal fields; salt mines, copper and iron mines, oil fields, an outlet upon the Baltic Sea, and the opportunity for finding markets; whereas if the New Poland should consist merely of Russian and Austrian Poland, it would be dependent on Russia, Austria and Germany for its markets and would be in precisely the same situation in which Serbia found herself of having an embargo placed upon her commerce at her boundaries. He therefore thought it important that the Jews of this and other countries should, in the interest of their own brethren, assist in the accomplishment of his plans, and, furthermore, that they should furnish capital with which to develop commerce and industries in Poland; since that would provide for the Jews and would help the Poles, and, of course, create a feeling of friendship and unity.

I answered that, before the Jews could be asked to take any position on this subject, it was a *sine qua non* that the Poles should put an immediate end to the boycott, that they should show by their attitude toward the Jews that the era of hatred and conflict, or, as Mr. Dmowski expressed it, "of struggle," was at an end, and that there should be a recognition of the injustice to which the Jews had been subjected. He said that that would all come in due time, but the only sure way of ending the struggle was to put an end to the real cause of it, which was the poverty of Poland.

I then said that I assumed that he was cognizant of the publications of Professor Dewey and of others, who charged his party with being Czaristic and Royalist, and that the common people of Poland were not represented in it. He replied that he knew of these publications, but did not understand how such views could have originated because they had no basis. It was true that, at the beginning of the war, he felt that he would have to be either pro-German or pro-Russian. He saw no hope for Poland from Germany because it was the German idea to create a Poland which would be merely a new German province, whereas a better opportunity for independence was to be

found in the friendship of Russia. He also admitted that at that time it was his idea that Poland would have to be governed by a monarchy, but said that his views on that subject had undergone a change, because he now saw that the days of monarchical governments were doomed throughout Europe, including Germany and Austria, and, therefore, that the only Poland now possible would be a Republic of Poland instead of a kingdom.

I RETURNED to the question of the membership of his party by calling attention to what I had read in the *Evening Post* to the effect that at the Polish Convention held in Detroit the radical and labor elements were not represented, which seemed to give some color to the charge of Professor Dewey that the party of Mr. Dmowski was not a democratic but rather an aristocratic party. He replied that he had nothing to do with the calling of that convention, that it would have been out of place for him to have attempted control because the convention was one of Polish-Americans, and that they would have resented any intrusion by him of his views; that the object of the convention was not political but related solely to the status of the Poles in America. I intimated that I had gained a different impression from the account of the proceedings of the convention, and especially since I knew that Mr. Paderewski, who was Mr. Dmowski's representative in this country, was extremely active in the convention.

This conversation lasted more than two hours. He finally said that he was very glad to have had this opportunity for an exchange of views, and that he was very anxious that there should be further conferences in the hope that a complete understanding could be reached; that it was his idea to take immediate action for the purpose of combating the boycott by indirect methods. To which

I replied, that I considered it the part of wisdom to take immediate and direct action to accomplish that end, because so long as the boycott prevailed no Jew could look upon Poland as other than hostile.

In the course of the conversation I tried to impress upon him the importance of enabling the Jews of Poland to become for Poland what they had been for this country, a source of strength. In reply he stated that he recognized their usefulness, their industry, and commercial ability. He said that they are neither superior nor inferior to the Poles. He regarded their strength to consist in their wisdom as distinguished from their intelligence—thirty centuries of experience in all parts of the world, under every possible condition of prosperity and misery, had developed in them the quality of wisdom. Whereupon I retorted that, assuming that I was a true son of Israel, wisdom prompted me to impress upon him the importance of purging Poland of an evil which would certainly lead to destruction. I asked him to consider the effect that the exclusion of the Jews had upon Spain and Portugal, and other countries, even England, during the centuries when they were not permitted to dwell there. He replied that there are no Jews in Japan and Japan has prospered, but, he said, perhaps I am wrong there, because I recognize the fact that but for Mr. Schiff, Japan would not be what it is today. I fully acquiesced in his conclusion.

He escorted me to the elevator and then said that, in view of the political developments of the last few days, he felt that it was desirable for him to go to Washington and to remain in this country for some little time, and that he was very anxious to resume our discussion.*

*This conversation was published in a pamphlet that appeared without date or name of publisher.